1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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closely paralleling that of their Hindu neighbors. On the other hand, their social organization is relatively lacking in the cleavages of caste which are so prevalent all about them. Apart from the village, which is usually composed of a number of patrilineal kin-groups, territorial organization is weakly developed, and the tribe as a whole has never been politically unified so far as historical records indicate.

Even as a unique people the Santal merit special attention. Numbering today over three million, the region they occupy contains the richest deposits of iron, coal and other crucial industrial minerals in all of India. The chief source of their livelihood, at least since the nineteenth century, has been settled agriculture. Prior to the nineteenth century, hunting was also an important livelihood activity, but the great increase in the region's population and subsequent reduction of forest areas has made game extremely scarce; it is now difficult for the inhabitants even to obtain materials for fuel and building purposes. Though the chief source of food and cash is the annual rice crop, a few vegetables are also grown and some fruit trees maintained. Some villages are near enough to a river for fish to be readily obtained, while some villages stock their local ponds. Even prior to the introduction of modern industry in the region, the Santal had ceased to be economically independent. Although they once did some pottery making, weaving, and even iron smelting, they have come to rely almost exclusively on various local Hindu castes for these material products. Women from several low Hindu castes are used frequently as midwives. While almost no Santal are ritually served by Brahmin priests, itinerant Hindu holy men (*sadhu*) visit many Santal villages, consulting horoscopes and offering prayers for a fee or donation.

Most Santal are still agriculturists, but some have turned to

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

r. About harbouring suspicion.

178 577 Formerly we had it very strict orderly, and the Santals also had a healthy fear of what is right; therefore men did not look at another man's wife. If they seduced the wife of another man, the woman's husband would cut them down; therefore there was no need of being suspicious. But nowadays there is no strict order; to cut people down they have also given up, and the Santals are also becoming very licentious; therefore people have no feeling of security; men and women suspect each other; there is no happiness at home. Nowadays they are also suspicious without cause, mostly so the women. As soon as a man looks at a girl or a married woman, his wife will at once accuse him; in this way much quarrel arises, and on account of this they also beat each other a good deal. Worried by the woman good husbands have also, in anger, got themselves co-wives.

s. About envy, and malice.

From olden times the Santals have been envying each other; but nowadays it is becoming more common. Men do not harbour much envy; mostly when in their youth some girl, being unwilling to agree to them, is married to some other young man, then they feel envy. Women are awfully envious. When they see others better off than themselves, they envy these; they feel envy towards those whom they suspect. They are envious towards those who look nicer than themselves; against men who will not marry them, they feel malice, and because of this malice they learn witchcraft and "eat" them, or if they do not "eat" them, they will "eat" the girl whom they are going to marry, and the envy of the wives of brothers destroys and maimes like leprosy. Half of the mutual complaints and fining that we have, have their origin in envy and malice, because the women do not only feel envy; they "eat", and they also set their husbands and relatives aflame by their talk; and the whole village is reduced to ashes.

t. About hating and taking revenge.

152 Santals do not much harbour hate; rather they get angry and furious; such anger will not, however, last a long time.

People who hate do not let their inner anger show; rather they speak sweetly to you; still they will not leave you, until they have done for you. Women especially harbour hate; like the fire in a warming-pan their mind is burning smouldering; and only when they get revenge, then only their mind cools down. Like snakes they bite when it is dark; you will never know anything, until the poison has taken effect in you.

u. About buying and selling.

178 433 436 262 In a former age there was no money, it is told, neither was there any buying and selling. All necessaries they were earning or making. For cooked food they had the millets iṛi, gundli, laṛo, orba, and janha, further maize, bajra, and paddy, and for curry the

beans hoṛeć, raheṛ, ghaṅgra, sutri; further alpaluạ, vegetables, fowls, pigs, goats, 178
hares, peafowls, the Indian Gaur, the Samber Stag, birds, and the winged creation. And 433
salt they were preparing from saline earth. They scrape off and bring some earth, mix
it up in an earthenware pot and strain it with water; they boil the water, and when the [262]
water evaporates, the salt comes there. Because it is very pungent, they cover it up in [263]
a cloth and bury it in hot ashes; then it becomes tasty salt. They were preparing this
during the cold season. Oil they were pressing out of different forest fruits; they were
weaving clothes for themselves. People of the Ṭuḍu sept were making all kinds of im- [184]
plements of iron; and they were themselves making winnowing-fans and baskets, earthen-
ware vessels, and so on. Whether we formerly had gold or not, we do not know; but in
the old country they called gold samanom. Later on people of the Baske sept were trans- 178
acting business, buying and selling by barter, and since rupees and pice have appeared,
we buy and sell using money. Formerly also the village people were bartering, some 497
bartered buffaloes for goats, some goats for pigs, and so on. [184]

Nowadays people of both sexes have become very lazy; they do not press oil, neither
do they prepare salt; they do not much weave cloth either; they buy everything; thereby [426]
we Santals are becoming poor, and we are becoming deeply involved in debt to
the money-lenders.

v. About debts and loans.

In former times no people were getting into debt or taking loans from the money- 178
lenders; and there were no money-lenders either. In the Sikhar country the money-
lenders found us for the first time. There the first money-lender with the Santals lived 426
in Nạnduạṛa. From that time up to now we are in their hands, and they are tearing us
up like vultures. By constantly paying we become numb; still the debt never comes to
an end. They say: "If a seer has come into the house, it will never get out again"; [539]
"a Deko usurer, an old hyena, even old bones they crunch". Really it was also due to
hardship in connexion with these that we ran away from Sikhar. At first they did not
unrighteously charge us interest to such a degree; they were taking only 25 pct., in paddy
or money; but gradually they commenced to charge exorbitantly. For a debt of three or
four rupees they would without justice or reason drive pair after pair of plough-cattle away,
and if you remonstrated with them, they would at once commence to strike.

But there is fault also on our side. Foolishly the Santals run into the hands of the
usurers; whether they will be able to pay back or not, this they do not think of, and
when they have what is needed to pay with, they will not pay at once; consequently
interest upon interest is heaped up; thereupon the money-lender comes and carries all and
everything away. And in the present age many Santals also deceitfully cheat the usurers
and money-lenders of what is their right.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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mahajans and many of us run to the tea-gardens to earn a living.'"[1]

Statistics sheds further light on the condition of the cattle, the mainstay of an agricultural population. "A large section of the aborigines consisting of the Santals, and the Bhumijs, and forming about 50 per cent of the population, do not care for milk as an item of nutrition. This perhaps contributes to a certain extent to their indifference to the improvement of cattle. Even as beasts of burden or as instruments of husbandry, the cattle in the state are very poor in quality."[2] So depending on such ricketty props, they can only turn out paddy and thereafter "biri" (*mug* pulse), in pathetic ignorance of supplementary means of livelihood like cottage-industries.

Little wonder that with such limited means of livelihood and scanty fare as we have already noticed they offer little resistance to intoxication. Their wants and worries weigh upon them so much that they take to drunken forgetfulness to drown their

1 Ref. *Census Report of Mayurbhanj*, 1931, p. 10, which reads "During the last decade 1,497 coolies belonging to this State were recruited for work in the tea-gardens by the garden-sirdars."

2 There are in all 600,000 heads of cattle in the State (Total population 8089,603) page 7; *Census Report* of Mayurbhanj, 1931.

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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735 sorrows. It is a pathetic sight to see young Santals
293 keep sober till they marry, and then grow old sud-
154 denly as cares and anxieties of life come to them,
when they plunge headlong in a sodden life.

181 The rigours of their life on the earth are some-
what overcome by the objects of material culture
we have noted in the foregoing pages. But one
can easily see that they are crude devices of a primi-
tive world, not serving their purpose well in the
[171] twentieth century. But, one must however notice
that the level of culture presented by the Santal is
on a par with that of the rest of the hill tribes of
what may be called the Central Belt of India, which
is a homogeneous culture-area in all important res-
pects.

Conclusion

174 As we conclude the review of Santal economic
181 life, we find that the actual stage reached by the
224 tribe in its material culture is still primitive. Their
241 traditions make it clear that there was a time in the
• 433 life of the Santals when they lived a semi-hunting
nomadic life, perpetually moving in quest of food.
But the picture we have got in the foregoing pages
reveals a people who have finally accepted the life of
settled agriculturists.

177 As, however, we look closely to the objects of
Santal material culture, we notice similarities with

St Culshaw · M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER 3

THE RHYTHM OF DAILY LIFE

THE rhythm of daily life in an agricultural community grows out of the close relationship between the activities of man and the cycle of nature. Work and recreation depend upon the seasons and their contrasts of heat and cold, of dry and wet weather, of springtime and harvest. The Santals distinguish three seasons during the year, each possessing a characteristic climate. The "cold days" last from November to March. The rice harvest is gathered during the earlier part of this season; food is therefore plentiful and people relax. The skies for the most part remain clear, and the absence of movement in the air causes a blue haze to hang over the villages in the evenings, formed by the wood smoke of the cooking fires. The nights are cold; morning and evening the folk crouch over small fires in the open to warm themselves. Sometimes, when the wind blows off the distant Himalayas, the days are also cold. The new year begins at this time. Then come the "heat days", when the west wind scorches the skin during the midday hours and often the nights too are unbearably hot. From time to time a storm blows up from the north-west in the late afternoon, stirring the dust and then laying it and cooling the earth with welcome raindrops, while loud claps of thunder are heard and vivid flashes of lightning chase across the sky. During these days the forest trees shed their leaves and take on a garment of new green, flowering trees make gay patterns against the deep blue of the sky, while both men and women spend much time in the forests, the former hunting and fishing, the women gathering fruits, leaves and roots. Springs, streams and wells dry up, and many women have to go long distances to obtain water for domestic needs. Then come the "heavy-rain days", which last from the end of June till October, the time of the south-west monsoon on which so much depends. Eagerly the Santals watch the signs of the sky, working for long hours until all the rice seedlings have been planted out; then rain and sun are left to bring the increase, while men watch and tend the fields.

The year is also divided into two parts, one of which, the season from June until the new harvest has been reaped, is known as "hunger-time". This name is an eloquent reminder of the danger of starvation; even in normal years the Santal's holding of land is insufficient to support his family. The years

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sand on the pathways becomes unbearably hot for our feet. Pigs were killed at dawn, cut, and the meat was roasted first thing so that it would be ready when the people returned home. The day turned out to be very warm. Some men went into the village of G—— because of their thirst to get a drink of beer, and they said: 'One pice worth of beer from G—— is as good as six pice of beer from that other place.' " The market is the main shopping centre for the villagers. There are cloth stalls and stalls of imported trinkets and ornaments. Potters, weavers, blacksmiths, purveyors of "medicines" and many others display their wares. The Santals may have grain for sale in a good year; they sell fowls and vegetables and buy their salt and cooking oil regularly, with other commodities at need. The market is a great place for the exchange of gossip, for meeting friends and relatives; it is here that many flirtations begin and matches are set in hand.

Nevertheless, the main business of the Santals' life, round which most of their activities centre, is to wrest from the poor soil the greatest possible amount of food. The struggle leaves little time for philosophizing, but they do sometimes crystallize in a phrase some bitter lesson from experience, as when they say: "Rain in the morning, like a friendship that is easily made, does not last." They work as hard as their social obligations allow. There is nothing distinctive in their methods of agriculture, and for generations they have been accustomed to settled cultivation and the use of the plough. The division of labour between men and women, the taboo against women handling the plough, they share with the surrounding culture. They observe the same propitious days and seasons for sowing and reaping as their neighbours. A great authority on the Santals has said:[1] "They are on their way to becoming agriculturalists, but are, as yet, far behind. . . . They have not as yet learnt the need for and the benefits of weeding and manuring, or of changing the crops, and much more. For example, they do not take proper care of their cattle. These are mostly herded by children, who use much of the time for their own games and pleasures. When the paddy is harvested, the cattle are permitted to roam about. A direct result of this is that it is impossible for people to have any crops standing after the middle of December or thereabouts; the cattle would

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, Pt. III, "How the Santals live", *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1940, Vol. X, No. 3, p. 434.